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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
ICAE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 DLOS-09 OES-09
/080 W
----------089459 271050Z /21
O 270941Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3005
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 2406

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, MILI, NATO, UR, NO, FI
SUBJ: SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER PROPOSED JOINT SOVIET/FINNISH
MILITARY MANEUVERS DURING RECENT VISIT

REF: (A) HELSINKI 2361, (B) STATE 187973,

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED WHAT IT CONSIDERS VERY RELIABLE INFORMATION FROM DIPLOMATIC AND MEDIA SOURCES AND FROM KNOWLEDGEABLE FINNS CLOSE TO GOVERNMENT THAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO FINLAND, SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER DMITRI USTINOV FORMAALLY PROPOSED TO THE FINNS THE HOLDING OF JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES BETWEEN SOVIET AND FINNISH MILITARY FORCES. THE SAME SOURCES REPORT THAT PRESIDENT KEKKONEN FIRMLY REJECTED THE SOVIET PROPOSAL. IT IS NOW APPARENT THAT THE HELSINGIN SANOMAT AND HUFVUDSTADSBLADET EDITORIALS (REFTEL A), WHILE OBSENSIBLY ANSWERING THE TIEDONANTAJA EDITORIAL, WERE IN FACT WRITTEN IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE USTINOV PROPOSAL. RUMORS AND SPECULATION CONCERNING THE PROPOSAL ARE SPREADING RAPIDLY IN HELSINKI, AND THE EMBASSY HOPES
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IT WILL SOON BE ABLE TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

2. AS FAR AS WE OUR OUR CONTACTS ARE AWARE, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE SOVIETS HAVE FORMALLY PROPOSED JOINT MILITARY MANEUVERS TO THE FINNS, ALTHOUGH THE SUBJECT HAS APPARENTLY BEEN DISCUSSED INFORMALLY IN THE PAST. WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN

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ATTEMPTING TO DETERMINE WHAT SIGNIFICANCE THE FINNS
ATTACHE TO THIS UNPRECEDENTED FORMAL PROPOSAL AND WHAT
MOTIVATIONS THEY ASCRIBE TO THE SOVIETS FOR MAKING
THE PROPOSAL AT THIS TIME.

3. WITH RESPECT TO SOVIET MOTIVATIONS, AND GIVEN THE
COINCIDENCE OF TIMING NOTED BY THE DEPARTMENT (REFTEL
B) BETWEEN THE RECENT SERIES OF SOVIET VIOLATIONS
IN NORWEGIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS AND THE BEGINNING OF
STANAVFORLANT EXERCISES, WE WONDER IF THE USTINOV PROPOSAL TO
THE FINNS MIGHT ALSO BE RELATED. ONE SOURCE SAID
THAT USTINOV RAISED THE JOINT MANEUVER QUESTION ON
JULY 13; HOWEVER, THE INDICATIONS ARE THAT HE ALSO
MADE THE PROPOSAL IN THE MORE FORMAL SETTING EARLIER DURING
HIS VISIT WHICH BEGAN JULY 11.

4. GIVEN THE FINNISH ROLE LAST YEAR IN DISCOURAGING
THE EXPANSION OF THE PARTICIPATION OF FRG TROOPS
IN THE NATO ARCTIC EXPRESS EXERCISES, IT IS
PLAUSIBLE TO SPECULATE THAT THE SOVIET PROPOSAL MAY
BE DESIGNED IN PART TO PRESSURE THE FINNS
TO TAKE ONCE AGAIN AN ACTIVE PART IN OPPOSING OR
PROTESTING THE PARTICIPATION OF FRG UNITS IN NATO
MANEUVERS IN NORWAY, THIS TIME IN THE STANAVFORLANT
EXERCISES. WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO INFORMATION TO
SUBSTANTIATE THIS SPECULATION AND NO INDICATION
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THAT THE FINNS SEE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SOVIET
PROPOSAL AND THE NATO EXERCISE. HOWEVER, IN
VIEW OF REFTEL B, WE WOULD NOT WANT AT THIS TIME
TO DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONNECTION.
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